

# TaxAct Texas Bowl: Oklahoma State vs Texas A&M

Thursday, December 28, 2023

Houston, Texas, USA

NRG Stadium

## Texas A&M Aggies

## Sam Mathews

### Press Conference



Oklahoma State - 31, Texas A&M - 23

**Q. Sam, 12th man, able to represent the Aggies one more time. You got a big time play. Can you talk about what you saw with the interception?**

SAM MATHEWS: I'm just playing what they told me. I was just staying high. I was playing inside and underneath leverage. I just had a simple job. I really just had to move all the routes, and luckily enough, that ball got placed in the perfect spot for me to get a pick in my first career start in my favorite NFL team stadium, somewhere I've never played before.

That's probably the top one moment of my life. That was pretty awesome.

**Q. Sam, can you just kind of talk about what the preparation has been like? When did you find out that you'd be starting? Did it change your preparation at all kind of feeling the weight of that?**

SAM MATHEWS: As far as knowing if I was starting, that was a game-time decision. We had a couple guys that were hopefully going to be able to play, and it wasn't for sure.

Obviously I just approached every practice like I was going to get my shot. It sure ended up paying off today. We didn't come out with the W, but I feel pretty confident this team is trending upwards right now.

**Q. You guys were kind of a ragtag defense tonight. I think six of you all had your first start. What was kind of your message to those guys? And what really changed in the second half? Because they kind of had your number there in the first half.**

SAM MATHEWS: For sure. As far as coming out in the second half, it was just halftime adjustments, getting with Coach Durkin and the other coaches and seeing where we might have been missing reads, just not being where we were supposed to be. As far as coming out in the second half, it was all halftime adjustments.

But to answer your first question, six of us getting our first starts, it was a lot of hungry people out there, a lot of people that have not about waiting for an opportunity to go show the world what they can do, and we finally got it tonight. Yeah, pretty proud of the guys and the way they handled the situation.

Throughout this season, there was -- obviously there was a big event, and it kind of caused a false narrative in the team that we were broken apart and we were hopeless. But those last weeks might have been my favorite weeks on this team, the way that everybody bonded together and committed to each other. It was awesome. It was special to be a part of.

**Q. On that interception play, you called it a pretty simple job, but how many times have you dreamt up that play in your memory over the past couple of years and did it live up to expectations?**

SAM MATHEWS: My gosh, the last couple of years, for sure. But last night I couldn't get any sleep. I was definitely envisioning maybe some different plays I could have made.

But, yeah, that moment was special. I grew up in Houston. I've been a longtime Houston Texans fan, so I came to a lot of games. Unfortunately, I was never able to play in this stadium, whether it be high school or college, and this was quite the ending to my journey.

That pick, this game, my start, it's been so surreal. These last couple hours have been a lot to take in. So I'm really trying to just soak it in with my friends. That's all.

**Q. At what point did you know you were going to get the start?**



SAM MATHEWS: I mean, running out on the field maybe. We were hoping one of our guys was going to be able to suit up. Been nursing an injury, and he was feeling like he might get the go ahead.

So we ran around pregame, and maybe things weren't feeling as right as they should have. So it was, Sam, it's your shot. This is your opportunity. Make the most out of it. All the guys were really rallying behind me. That's a great group of guys right there, supportive.

I mean, the coaches are pouring into you every single day. It could have been easy for them to just leave. Their job's not guaranteed here. It could have been easy for them to just give up on the team. Playing in the Texas Bowl, and they're not sure if they're going to stick around for the next year.

So I really appreciate everything that this organization -- players, staff, coaches, everybody included -- put into it tonight.

**Q. You mentioned Marcel cutting up defenses when he was doing scout team stuff. What has he been like in practice, and what did you see from him out there as well?**

SAM MATHEWS: That kid is going to be special. As far as going on scout team against him as a quarterback, talk about platform throws, just making defenders look silly. You guys got a brief look at it tonight. He's shifty for real, and he can sling the ball.

So I have really high hopes for Marcel. He just attacks practice like a professional, like he's been there before and this is his team. I have high hopes for that kid. I think he's going to take us far.

**Q. Sam, first about Marcel, I think he threw for more yards tonight than any other quarterback this season. So what does that say about a guy that -- I mean, I know he prepared, but it wasn't like he prepared as a starter knowing he was going to play the whole ballgame. You just throw him in there and look what you got.**

SAM MATHEWS: That's kind of been the story of the team for the last couple of weeks. With everything happening, you're not exactly sure what is coming week in and week out. For Marcel to go in there and play as confidently as he did, props to him. Shout out to the offense for really slowing things down and making it easy for him.

Like I said, that kid plays confident. He's shifty. He has great arm strength. And you guys have really got to pay

attention to his off platform throws. You'll be seeing some Heisman reels soon.

**Q. My follow up to you is you didn't get the win, but what a Hollywood script that would have been if you guys would have.**

SAM MATHEWS: Yeah, obviously I wish we could have pulled out the W. Like I said, I couldn't be more proud of this team, this organization, the way we handle things. It wasn't an easy ride this season, but definitely I'd say my favorite out of my three here. These guys have really bonded together, and I've had relationships this year that I see lasting a lifetime.

A special thank you to Coach E. Rob and the rest of the staff and the rest of the players. This season has been one I'll never forget.

**Q. Sam, you said that the interception was your top one memory. Where does the pop on (indiscernible) go? You hit him pretty good in the second quarter.**

SAM MATHEWS: That was pretty solid. Talk about the dope blocker award, he's a stud. Game planning against him was pretty tough. We thought we knew what he could do, and he kind of went out there and did what he did.

It was fun to go back and forth with him. A little bit of trash talking, but it was fun. I just getting out there to compete. I don't know what the hit looked like. I didn't get to catch it on replay or anything. I know which one you're talking about, and I'll have to go back and watch it. I hope it's as big as you made it sound.

**Q. What did he say to you when he got up?**

SAM MATHEWS: Good hit.

**Q. Sam, that's not trash talking.**

SAM MATHEWS: He didn't say good hit.

(Laughter).

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